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TO THE FRIENDS OF THE

A. B. C. F. M.

The *Independent* of August 13th contains two very remarkable and peculiar letters, from two American missionaries, who are editorially designated as 'two of the most able, devoted and successful missionaries in the East,' one 'in Western Asia,' and the other 'in a neighboring field.'

The first of these letters, written from one missionary to the other, is dated May 5th, 1857. The second letter, from the second missionary, and enclosing the letter of the first to some one in this country, is dated June 1st, 1857. We are left in entire ignorance from what particular places, and *from* what persons, and *to* what persons, these letters were sent. Why is this reserve? Is it because both letters express a very strong and heartfelt opposition to American slavery?

The *Independent* wishes these strong expressions of anti-slavery feeling to be heard and heeded, and calls

A522

attention to them in the following introductory paragraphs:—

'THE TESTIMONY OF MISSIONARIES AGAINST AMERICAN SLAVERY.

'The Christian sentiment of the world, in every form, is arrayed against the system of slavery which exists in the United States. But perhaps no testimony against that system is so strong and so impressive as that which comes from American missionaries, who from their distant fields of labor look back upon their native land. Their love for their country would incline them to look charitably upon her faults, while their relations to the Christian community dispose them always to speak with caution upon home affairs. They are removed from all party and sectional strife upon the subject of slavery, and therefore look upon that subject, not with the excited feelings of controversialists, but with the calmness of impartial observers. As a class, missionaries live near to God, and some of them are eminent for holiness. They are accustomed to look upon every institution, measure, or event, in its bearing upon the kingdom of Christ, and thus their feelings become as sensitive to anything affecting that kingdom as the barometer to changes of the atmosphere. The churches in this land, therefore, ought to give special heed to the views and feelings of missionaries on the subject of slavery. *They* are not "infidels," "radicals," or "fanatics."

'Formerly, our missionaries looked upon slavery as an evil which they had left far behind them, and with which they had no concern. Now, however, since communication has been so freely opened with all parts of the world, they find the shame and scan-

dal of American slavery a positive hindrance to their work. Converted heathen are amazed that slavery exists in this Christian land, and opposition to the Gospel among the unevangelized is strengthened by this monstrous incongruity. The lamented Stoddard once said, "We do not dare to let our converts know that slavery exists in America; for how could we reconcile it with our professions as a Christian nation."'

The language of the second of the letters referred to is so very peculiar and significant that I quote some of its first sentences:—

'June 1st, 1857.

'My Dear Brother,—The groanings of the missionary over his retrograding country ought perhaps sometimes to be heard. With this view, I send you the enclosed letter from Mr. —— to myself, which you are at liberty to publish just as it is forwarded, if you think proper. Names need not be given; for the sentiment of the letter probably represents the feelings of most of our missionaries in these regions. It was of course not penned for the public eye; but the spontaneous gushings of an aching heart, poured into the ear of a brother missionary, are at least as true an index of that heart as any more formal expression could be.'

Why is the strong protest against slavery, (which is the prominent point in both the letters referred to) thus anonymously written and published? Why does the missionary say that his complaints upon this subject ought *perhaps sometimes* to be heard? Why does he say, in giving permission to publish the letter

of his anti-slavery associate—'Names need not be given'? and why does he say, (as if it explained the propriety of withholding the names of persons and places,) '*for* the sentiment of the letter probably represents the feelings of most of our missionaries in these regions?' In short, why must the anti-slavery sentiments of American missionaries in foreign lands be sent to this country stealthily, and published at second hand, with such precautions, instead of being sent directly to the Board, and published, with their other communications, in the *Missionary Herald* and the Annual Reports? The purpose of this paper is to answer these inquiries, and to do this, it is necessaty to look as far back as 1837, in the history of the Board.

In that year, several of the Sandwich Island missionaries became deeply impressed with a sense of the guilt of slavery, the danger incurred by their native country in supporting such a wicked system, and the responsibility of the church for its removal. I have now before me copies of letters from three of those persons, one from Rev. Jonathan S. Green, dated at Honolulu, Oahu, in May, one from Rev. Peter Gulick, from the same station, in June, and the third from Rev. H. R. Hitchcock, dated at Kaluaaha in November. They all breathe the same spirit; but to show the strength of their sentiments and the vigor of their language, I subjoin extracts from the last two:

'HONOLULU, JUNE, 1837.

DEAR BROTHER WRIGHT,—I can hardly tell whether personal regard, or the warm sympathy I feel for

you as one engaged, heart and soul, in the great, the blessed, the arduous cause of abolition, has the greater influence in prompting me to address you. Ever since I seriously considered the subject, my sympathies have been with the abolitionists, and those for whom they labor. It is, however, but *recently* I have become thoroughly convinced that the system of slavery ought to be *immediately abolished*. And yet this point seems now so clear and plain, that I almost wonder how any *real Christian* could hesitate a moment in coming to a right conclusion. Perhaps one of the greatest causes of delusion in this and similar cases, is, our proneness to look at them in what we *call* the light of *expediency*. But what *right* have men, who have the Bible, to follow any other light than of Revelation? I believe, *assuredly*, that abolition is the cause of God, and must, therefore, triumph. The Lord hasten it in his time! I believe, too, that the reproach, abuse and violence which the friends of the cause (and yourself among others) are called to endure, in publishing the truth, will tend powerfully to accelerate the accomplishment of your desires.

You will perceive by the preceding printed resolutions, that we, as a mission, do not forget our brethren who are in *bonds*. Indeed, the situation of the mass of this nation keeps the subject of slavery almost constantly before our eyes, and in our minds. The condition of the laboring class (which is almost the whole nation) is that of slavery in its mildest form, however. No corporeal punishments are resorted to, to extort labor, nor are families broken up, and the marriage relation disregarded, as in the slave States of my beloved, though guilty country. Nor do the chiefs, who are the *only masters*, desire to *exclude* mental cultivation; but rather

endeavor to promote its general diffusion : still, with these and other palliations, the system tends strongly to idleness, (for who would love to work without recompense?) and is pregnant with evils ruinous to all classes. From the bottom of my heart, therefore, I say, 'God speed the abolitionists, till every yoke of oppression is broken throughout the whole earth.' Oppression has been greatly mitigated here by the introduction of the Gospel; but much remains still to be done. P. GULICK.

KALUAAHA, Nov. 18, 1837.

To the Editor of the Emancipator :

DEAR SIR,—An accidental perusal of some of the numbers of your paper induces me, though a stranger, to write you. I write on a sheet containing a sort of circular to Christians in form of resolutions; not doubting that while you are engaged in the truly philanthropic and Christian work of pleading for the oppressed in the *land of freedom*, you have a deep interest also in the efforts of those who are laboring to break the bonds of pagan darkness.

'Though our fields of labor are at a great distance from each other, and are different in some respects, yet I feel that our object is the same,—that of breaking every bond, of letting the captives go free. Be assured, sir, that in the prosecution of this object, you have my prayers and best wishes for your success. No intelligence from my native land interests me more than that which announces the progress of the cause of the slave.

I write because it is a privilege for me, (as I think it should be for every Christian,) to take an open

and decided stand in favor of those who are laboring to crush slavery. Especially is this a privilege at a time when morbid prudence or time-serving policy is setting afloat the sentiment that it is a subject with which the missionary should not intermeddle. I must confess that if the immediate abolition of slavery is a subject in which Christians of every name, circumstance or occupation, whether public or private, individual or corporate, may not and should not take an open, undisguised, and active part, then there is no subject in all the wide field of benevolent action in which they should do so. Of all the abominations that have cursed the earth, where is there one more flagrant than that of enslaving and crushing to dust our fellow men? Of all the sins, which Christians are called upon to oppose at the present day, where is there a more heinous one than the one your society are laboring to destroy? The mere fact that insisting upon the immediate abolition of slavery, and that describing in Bible language the odiousness of traffic in human flesh, will disoblige a class of interested persons, however great, is no proof that either sound prudence or the religion of Christ requires one to forbear. A *neutral position* in reference to the immediate destruction of slavery can be justified by the spirit of the gospel no more than the same position can be in reference to the destruction of intemperance, perjury, or highway robbery. And there can be little doubt that were those sins as intimately interwoven with the worldly interests and profits of so large a portion of the country as is the existence of slavery, the same policy which now keeps so many aloof from those who are laboring to put down the latter, would do the same in reference to those who should

strive to put down the former. Were the sin of holding slaves confined to a few—and those few of little or no wealth or influence, the neutrality which now exists in reference to its immediate abolition would probably be unknown. How disconsonant to the benevolent, but uncompromising spirit of the Bible! '*Open thy mouth for the dumb, in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction. Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy*,' is a divinely inspired injunction, which no human policy whatever can justify us in evading.

I am happy to inform you of what I hope you may be officially informed hereafter: that this mission (so far as I know) TO A MAN, ARE IN FAVOR OF THE IMMEDIATE EMANCIPATION OF THE SLAVE, and that we of course as a body are deeply interested in the success of the object to which your paper is devoted. As we do not get the paper, or indeed any other exclusively devoted to the interests of the anti-slavery society, you would do me a favor, and perhaps promote the interests of the cause, by sending us a file. I think good use will be made of it.

As to the above resolutions, suffice it to say that however they may fail to recommend themselves to the Christian public, they are the unanimous sentiments of this body on the subjects to which they refer. They were not adopted rashly, or under the impulse of convivial excitement; but after a prayerful and serious discussion. They are sentiments, in the promulgation of which we all feel the deepest interest. Should this strike you, sir, as just, you will do the cause of missions a favor by giving them a place in the *Emancipator*.

Let the importance of the cause, dear sir, excuse

the obtrusion of this letter upon you, and believe me your cordial and respectful friend and fellow laborer, H. R. HITCHCOCK.

These, and others of the Sandwich Island missionaries, feeling at once the atrocious character of slavery itself, and its detrimental influence upon their missionary work, not only wrote letters like the above to their other friends, but made similar appeals to their employers, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, sending them, among other things, two anti-slavery documents printed on the mission press, one a tract, and the other a series of resolutions, printed on a letter sheet, referred to in the two preceding letters, both making a very earnest and affecting appeal to American Christians to apply themselves at once to the work of overthrowing American slavery.

How were this appeal and these documents received by the Board?

They referred the whole matter to a committee, consisting of Drs. Fay and Skinner, Rev. Henry Dwight, and John Tappan and Zechariah Lewis, Esqs., who reported the following resolution, which was *adopted* in September, 1837, and, after discussion, *reaffirmed*, September, 1839, and which *still remains in force*:—

'In general, the sole object of the printing establishments connected with the missions of the Board shall be to exert a direct influence upon the surrounding native population, and NO MISSION OR MEM-

BER OF A MISSION MAY PRINT ANY LETTER, TRACT OR APPEAL, AT THESE ESTABLISHMENTS, AT THE EXPENSE OF THE BOARD, WITH A VIEW TO ITS BEING SENT TO INDIVIDUALS, OR COMMUNITIES, IN THE UNITED STATES.'

This prohibition of the diffusion of such humane and Christian sentiments as, being contained in the preceding letters, we must suppose were repeated in the tract and the printed sheet of resolutions, is a fair specimen of the despotic style of administration, and of the pro-slavery character, which have been manifest in the Board from that time to the present; but the clause, 'AT THE EXPENSE OF THE BOARD' is a cruel addition of insult to injury, if we remember that the persons thus insolently rebuked had given *themselves*, with their small worldly possessions, to the Board, and thus had no means of uttering the honest convictions of their hearts to friends at a distance, except by using the paper and ink purchased by the Board with the funds entrusted to them by Christians for the diffusion of Christian light and knowledge. If the missionaries found a fire opened in their rear by the shameless extension of heathenism at home, under the eye, and with the sanction of the Board, why should they not use the means furnished them by the Christian public to remonstrate against it?

The Board have chosen to suppress the important anti-slavery testimony sent them in 1837 (for the Christian community) by the Sandwich Island missionaries, and to prohibit the printing of any more

similar messages to Christians in this country, on the Mission presses. And we see, by the letters in the *Independent* referred to at the commencement of this article, that so arbitrary and stringent is the supervision still exercised over the missionaries, that even in writing private letters containing any protest against the enormous wickedness of slavery, they feel obliged to take precautions against the discovery of their names. I therefore call upon the Board—as an act of justice, alike to the missionaries, whose letters to the Christian public they have thus unjustifiably suppressed, and to that public, who have a right to hear the appeals, and to know the sentiments, of the men who are supported by *their* contributions—to bring out from the files of the Mission House that tract and that printed sheet of resolutions, read them to the public at the approaching annual meeting in Providence, print them as an appendix to the Annual Report, and publish them in the *Missionary Herald;* and I further call on them to rescind the shameful resolution quoted above, by which the mouths of their missionaries have been and still are gagged, and to call for, *and publish when it comes*, a free expression of opinion from the missionaries, upon the proper course to be adopted towards a system which interferes so materially with their success in their missionary labors as American slavery.

That the present position of the Board in relation to slavery may be fully understood, let us glance at its action upon that subject during the years following

1837 to the present time. To rehearse the details of this action would fill a volume, and would include many sophistical and some mutually contradictory declarations, but its *substance* can be given in a comparatively short space.

Until the Board were compelled, by the action of a small but pertinacious minority, to pay some attention to the subject of slavery, and take some action upon it, they ignored that subject altogether. Even in taking the responsibility of publicly authenticating a person as a Christian (as, by sending him forth as a missionary, or admitting him to membership in a mission church,) they no more inquired whether he was a slaveholder than whether he was a landholder, or a mechanic, or a democrat. Their agents, who annually travel through the Southern States, and preach in Southern pulpits, to raise funds for the conversion of the *heathen*, have made no protest against that slavery which has been manufacturing and perpetuating a race of heathen under their very eyes. Several of their missionaries have been slaveholders, and others have extensively used the hired labor of slaves, thus participating in that system which defrauds the actual laborer of the profit of his toil. They have also freely admitted slaveholders to their churches, and have been so far from discouraging slavery by church discipline, that one of the Secretaries of the Board (in the *Missionary Herald*, the official organ of the A. B. C. F. M., Oct. 1848, p. 349,) represented the increased number of slaves in the Cherokee and Choctaw nations, and the general preference there felt for the in-

vestment of money in this 'species of property,' as one of the results of 'the doctrines of the Gospel having exerted their appropriate influence.'

Since the year 1839, the Board have been urged at many annual meetings, (by a minority which, however small, was the representative of too much money, as well as respectability, to be altogether disregarded,) to withdraw the support and countenance which they were affording to slavery. The petitions and memorials thus presented were always referred to committees, and the committees generally recommended that the subject be let alone, expressing perfect satisfaction with the position of the Board.

To give an idea of the manner in which this momentous subject was treated in these Reports, we give an abstract of one of them, presented at Brooklyn in 1845, by a committee consisting of Dr. Woods of Andove and nine others, eight of them clergymen:

As to declarations and measures of hostility to slavery, the Committee recommend to the Board no new action, and refer the petitioners to the reports of previous meetings, (which say that the Board cannot turn aside from its peculiar and appropriate work of preaching the Gospel, to condemn slavery.)

The only Mission Churches of which slaveholders are known to be members are among the Cherokee and Choctaw Indians. Slavery existed among them when the missionaries entered on their labors among these tribes. The qualification for membership in the mission-churches is "satisfactory evidence of a saving change of heart, and of repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ." Sundry slaveholders,

designing to continue such, were considered to have given this evidence, and were accordingly received into the church. As to the kind and amount of instruction given by the missionaries in relation to slavery, the Committee quote the language of one of them, who says, "We give such instructions to masters and servants as are contained in the Epistles, and yet not in a way to give the subject a peculiar prominence; *for then it would seem to be personal*, as there are usually but one or two slaveholders at our meetings. In private, we converse about all the evils and dangers of slavery."

The Committee admit that the slave-laws among the Cherokees and Choctaws prohibit teaching slaves to read, throw impediments in the way of emancipation, restrict slaves in the possession of property, and embarrass the residence of free negroes among them. They believe that the destructive influence of slavery is seen on the morals of both master and slave; that it sweeps away those barriers which every civilized community has erected to protect the purity and chastity of the family relations, and that it will ever present formidable obstacles to the right training of the rising generation.

The Committee however believe, that the missionaries in these slaveholding communities have been faithful to their work. *They approve the admission of slaveholders to their churches*, and have no different plan to recommend to them for the future.

The report was unanimously adopted.

After having delayed and protracted the matter as long as possible, the Board was compelled by the pertinacity of the remonstrants, to make some decision; and their decision, which still remains in force, is, that

SLAVEHOLDERS MAY BE ADMITTED AS MEMBERS, IN GOOD AND REGULAR STANDING, OF THE MISSION CHURCHES. The Board clearly *implied* their consent to the continuance of this practice in the mission churches, at their meeting in Boston, in 1848; and they *formally ratified* it at the meeting in Hartford, in 1854.

In reading over the long array of reports and correspondence relative to this matter in the Annual Reports of the Board, (in which pious language is frequently used to excuse impious conduct and wicked laws,) we see by the very apologies, both of the missionaries and the Board, how completely this matter of slavery has been in their own hands from the beginning, and how the corruption of the mission-churches has resulted from that of the missionaries and their employers. Slavery existed when the missions were founded, by their own confession. So did drunkenness, so did theft, so did adultery, so did murder! Why did they keep these out of the Church, if they let slavery in? Why did they let slavery in, if they kept these out? It was their imperative duty, in founding a church, to brand as infamous, and utterly incompatible with the Christian character, participation in that system which, by making chattels of men, women and children, authorizes any outrage which may subsequently be inflicted on them. I repeat it. The power to keep their churches pure from this infamy, *from the beginning*, was entirely in their own hands. They did not use it. And when called to account for it, they allege in excuse, that *public sen-*

timent and *ecclesiastical usage* were not then opposed to slavery; and one of them gives, as his reason for not dealing with slavery in the Church, after it had gained admission, that—*it would have seemed personal*, as but few slaveholders attended the church-meetings. Worthy successors, these, of those apostles who turned the world upside down!

Is it not the extreme of unfaithfulness, for a class of men whose daily avocation is the study and promulgation of good morals and religion, to suffer that which they admit to be '*an anti-Christian* system*'—'*at war† with the rights of man, and opposed to the principles of the Gospel*'—to exist in their churches without interference until it was assailed by 'the world' without? And is it not the extreme of impudence for *them* to allege, in serious excuse for this delinquency, that that very 'world' without, (the printers, lawyers, butchers, carpenters, &c., whose interest in religion was only personal, and not professional like their own, and towards whom they assume themselves to be as 'light' for guidance, and as 'salt' for preservation,) had not yet renounced this practice? Yet such is the position of the missionaries and of the Board!

Thus, after many attempts to evade a formal expression of opinion, the American Board of Foreign Missions, at its meeting in Hartford, in 1854, formally ratified a theory in conformity with the long standing practice of its churches, TO ADMIT SLAVEHOLDERS TO CHURCH-MEMBERSHIP, AS CHRISTIANS.

* Ann. Report of 1848, p. 107. † Ibid, p. 105.

What say the remonstrants, in regard to this audacious baptism of slavery into full communion with the Church?

What says the *Independent*, edited by Dr. Joseph P. Thompson and others, who have heretofore seemed very zealous against slavery?

Wonderful to tell, in an article (Aug. 13) entitled 'Meeting of the American Board,' in the very next column to the extract we have quoted at the commencement of this article, and by an 'incongruity' no less 'monstrous' than that which is there delineated, the *Independent* says:

'The meeting of the American Board, to be held at Providence on the second Tuesday in September, promises to be one of unusual interest and moment for the cause of Missions. No question is likely to arise at that meeting which will agitate the public mind, or divide the counsels of the Board. THE QUESTION OF SLAVERY WAS SETTLED UPON A SATISFACTORY BASIS AT HARTFORD! * * * * The great questions of principle and policy which have sometimes agitated the Board ARE NOW SETTLED FOR THIS GENERATION.'

This is even a more complete surrender than Dr. Thompson made of himself at the late annual meeting of the Tract Society. He was perfectly satisfied with the Report of its Investigating Committee, both upon its negative and positive side, (whatever new light upon it may since have reached him;) but this article assumes that (at least as far as the *Independent* is concerned) no further protest is to be made against the pro-slavery position of the Board during

the life-time of this generation. And, if silence gives consent, we must suppose all the former remonstrants to have come to the same shameful conclusion.

Possibly, however, the *Independent* relied too confidently on the degeneracy of the Church and its ministers. Possibly there may be *one* left, among the members of the Board, who is not willing to bow the knee to this Baal. Possibly one may yet be found who is willing to stand forth alone, and break this deceitful peace which has usurped the place of purity, and demand, in the name of Christ, and of his brethren the slaves of church-members under the supervision of the American Board, that this covenant with death be annulled, that this agreement with hell be not suffered to stand. If there be a single member who *wishes* this to be done, let him not fail to *do* it. Let no supposed 'necessity of courtesy towards an associate'—no entreaty that the 'satisfactory basis' may be suffered 'to stand for *this* year'—no fear 'to provoke a personal discussion'—no 'high respect' for the representatives of pro-slavery piety, and no fear of 'wounding their sensibilities,' be suffered to prevent an earnest and vigorous protest, at the approaching meeting of the Board, against its shameful compromise with slavery. But if no one thus raises his voice, if no one dares, or, still worse, if no one *cares*, to speak for the cause of the slave before that great representative of the Church, that fact must go to swell the already long catalogue of proofs that the American Church is the bulwark of American slavery.—C. K. W.

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